

WOMAN AND THE SUFFRAGE*

THE CASE FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE

By JULIA WARD HOWE

WHEN the stripling David, having rashly undertaken to encounter the Philistine giant, found himself obliged to choose a weapon for the unequal fight, he dismissed the costly armament offered him by the King, and went back to the simple stone and sling with which he was familiar. Even in like manner will I, pledged just now to make a plain statement of the claims of woman to suffrage, trust myself to state the case as it appeared to me when, after a delay of some years, I finally gave it my adhesion.

Having a quick and rather preponderating sense of the ridiculous, I had easily apprehended the humorous associations which would at first attach themselves to any change in the political status of women. It had once appeared to me answer enough to the new demand to ask the mothers what they proposed to do with their babies, with their husbands, that they should find time for the exercise of these very superfluous functions.

While I still so spake and so thought, behold, a race of men became enfranchised by the appeal to arms. The conquest of their rights demanded the power to defend those rights, and this power the logic of history had placed in the ballot, whose object it is to secure to every person of sane and sound mind the availing expression of his political faith and individual will.

I had by this time cast in my lot with those to whom the right of the negro to every human function and privilege appeared a point to be maintained at all hazards. It had been determined that the slave should become a free man, and, further than this, that, in order to maintain his freedom, he must perform the offices of a free citizen.

Two new thoughts now came to me in the shape of questions: Why was the vote so vital a condition of the freedom of an American citizen? And, if it was held to be so vital, why should every man possess it, and no woman? I did and do believe in equal civic rights for all human beings, without regard to race, subject only to such tests as may be applied impartially to all alike. But there seemed a special incongruity in put-

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ting this great mass of ignorant men into a position of political superiority to all women. The newly enfranchised men were generally illiterate and of rather low morality. Should they, simply on account of sex, be invested with a power and dignity withheld from women, who at that time were unquestionably better fitted to intervene in matters of government than men could be who for many generations past had been bought and sold like cattle, men who would have the whole gamut of civilization to learn by heart before they could have any availing knowledge of what a vote should really mean? Here were ignorance and low life commissioned to lord it over the august company of the mothers. Here were the natural guardians of childhood debarred from the highest office in its defense. I felt that this could not be right; and when the foremost friends of the negro showed themselves as the foremost champions of the political enfranchisement of women, I had no longer any hesitation in saying, This must be the keystone of the arch, whose absence leaves so sad and strange a gap in the construction of our political morality.

Since then the question of suffrage for women has passed out of the academic stage, and has become a matter of practical observation and experience in an ever-growing number of States and countries. Experience has shattered, like a house of cards, all the old predictions that it would destroy the home, subvert the foundations of society, and have a ruinous influence both on womanly delicacy and on public affairs. During many years the opponents of woman suffrage have been diligently gathering all the adverse testimony that they could find. So far as appears by their published literature, they have not found, in all our enfranchised States put together, a dozen respectable men, residents of those States, who assert over their own names and addresses that it has had any ill effects. A few say that it has done no good, and call it a failure on that ground. But the mass of testimony on the other side is overwhelming.

The fundamental argument for woman suffrage, of course, is its justice; and this would be enough were there no other. But a powerful argument can also be made for it from the standpoint of expediency. It has now been proved to demonstration, not only that woman suffrage has no bad results, but that it has certain definite good results.

1. It gives women a position of increased dignity and influence. On this point I will quote from five people whose word has weight in our own land and abroad.

Miss Margaret Long, daughter of the ex-Secretary of the Navy, who has resided for years in Denver, has written: "It seems impossible to me

that any one can live in Colorado long enough to get into touch with the life here, and not realize that women count for more in all the affairs of this State than they do where they have not the power that the suffrage gives. More attention is paid to their wishes, and much greater weight given to their opinions and judgment."

Mrs. Sarah Platt Decker, of Denver, ex-president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs and ex-president also of the Colorado State Board of Charities, writes: "Under equal suffrage, there is a much more chivalrous devotion and respect on the part of men, who look upon their sisters not as playthings or as property, but as equals and fellow-citizens."

Mrs. K. A. Sheppard, President of the New Zealand Council of Women, says: "Since women have become electors, their views have become important and command respect. Men listen to and are influenced by the opinions of women to a far greater degree than was the case formerly. There is no longer heard the contemptuous 'What do women know of such matters?' And so out of the greater civil liberty enjoyed by women has come a perceptible rise in the moral humanitarian tone of the community. A young New Zealander in his 'teens no longer regards his mother as belonging to a sex that must be kept within a prescribed sphere. That the lads and young men of a democracy should have their whole conception of the rights of humanity broadened and measured by truer standards is in itself an incalculable benefit."

Mrs. A. Watson Lister, Secretary of the Woman's National Council of Australia, says: "One striking result of equal suffrage is that members of Parliament now consult us as to their bills, when these bear upon the interests of women. The author of the new divorce bill asked all the women's organizations to come together and hear him read it, and make criticisms and suggestions. I do not remember any such thing happening before, in all my years in Australia. When a naturalization bill was pending, one clause of which deprived Australian women of citizenship if they married aliens, a few women went privately to the Prime Minister and protested, and that clause was altered immediately. After we had worked for years with members of Parliament for various reforms, without avail, because we had no votes, you cannot imagine the difference it makes."

Ex-Premier Alfred Deakin, of the Commonwealth of Australia, says: "There is now a closer attention paid in Parliament to matters especially affecting the (feminine) sex or interesting them."

2. It leads to improvements in the laws. No one can speak more fitly of this than Judge Lindsey, of the Denver Juvenile Court. He

writes: "We have in Colorado the most advanced laws of any State in the Union for the care and protection of the home and the children, the very foundation of the Republic. We owe this more to woman suffrage than to any one cause. It does not take any mother from her home duties to spend ten minutes in going to the polls, casting her vote, and returning to the bosom of her home; but during those ten minutes she yields a power which is doing more to protect that home, and all other homes, than any other power or influence in Colorado."

Mrs. Helen L. Grenfell, of Denver, served three terms as State Superintendent of Public Instruction for Colorado, and is highly esteemed by educators throughout the State. She introduced in Colorado the system of leasing instead of selling the lands set apart by the government for the support of the public schools, thereby almost doubling the annual revenue available for education. Mrs. Grenfell was appointed by the Governor to represent Colorado at the Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance at Amsterdam last summer. In her report to that congress she enumerated a long list of improved laws obtained in Colorado since women were granted the ballot, and added: "Delegates of the Interparliamentary Union who visited different parts of the United States for the purpose of studying American institutions declared concerning our group of laws relating to child life in its various aspects of education, home, and labor, that 'they are the sanest, most humane, most progressive, most scientific laws relating to the child to be found on any statute-books in the world.'"

Wyoming, many years ago, passed a law that women teachers in the public schools should receive the same pay as men when the work done is the same. The news that Utah had granted full suffrage to women was quickly followed by the announcement of the passage of a bill providing that women teachers should have equal pay with men when they held certificates of the same grade. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction for Colorado says: "There is no difference made in teachers' salaries on account of sex."

Woman suffrage has also operated to take the schools out of politics. Mrs. Grenfell writes: "I have seen or heard of more party politics in school matters in one block in Albany, Buffalo, or Philadelphia than in the 103,928 square miles of Colorado soil."

Since women attained the ballot, all the four equal suffrage States have raised the age of protection for girls to eighteen. In Idaho and Wyoming the repeal of the laws that formerly licensed gambling is universally ascribed to the women. The Colorado statutes against cruelty to animals and against obscene literature are said to be models of their kind.

Within four years after equal suffrage was granted, the number of no-license towns in Colorado had more than quadrupled, and it has increased much more largely since. The organ of the brewers of Denver says that Colorado made a great mistake in giving the ballot to women. So far as I am aware it is the only paper in Colorado which takes that ground.

Under the title "Fruits of Equal Suffrage," the National American Woman Suffrage Association has published a partial list of the improved laws passed in the four enfranchised States with the aid of women's votes, giving chapter and verse for each. It fills nearly eight pages.

3. Women can bring their influence to bear on legislation more quickly and with less labor by the direct method than by the indirect. In Massachusetts the suffragists worked for fifty-five years before they succeeded in getting a law making mothers equal guardians of their minor children with the fathers. After half a century of effort by indirect influence, only twelve out of our forty-six States have taken similar action. In Colorado, when the women were enfranchised, the very next Legislature passed such a bill.

4. Equal suffrage often leads to the defeat of bad candidates. This is conceded even by Mr. A. Lawrence Lewis, whose article in *The Outlook* against woman suffrage in Colorado has been reprinted by the anti-suffragists as a tract. He says:

"Since the extension of the franchise to women, political parties have learned the inadvisability of nominating for public offices drunkards, notorious libertines, gamblers, retail liquor dealers, and men who engage in similar discredited occupations, because the women almost always vote them down." During the fifteen years since equal suffrage was granted no saloonkeeper has been elected to the Board of Aldermen in Denver. Before that it was very common. I quote again from Governor Shafroth, of Colorado: "Women's presence in politics has introduced an independent element which compels better nominations."

Ex-Chief Justice Fisher, of Wyoming, says: "If the Republicans nominate a bad man and the Democrats a good one, the Republican women do not hesitate a moment to 'scratch' the bad and substitute the good. It is just so with the Democrats."

Ex-Governor Hunt, of Idaho: "The woman vote has compelled not only State conventions, but more particularly county conventions, of both parties to select the cleanest and best material for public office."

And quoting once more from Judge Lindsey, of Denver: "One of the greatest advantages from woman suffrage is the fear on the part of the machine politicians to nominate men of immoral character. While many

bad men have been elected in spite of woman suffrage, they have not been elected because of woman suffrage. If the women alone had a vote, it would result in a class of men in public office whose character for morality, honesty, and courage would be of a much higher order."

The recent re-election of Judge Lindsey by the mothers of Denver, against the opposition of both the political machines, is only a striking instance of what has happened in a multitude of less conspicuous cases in the various enfranchised States.

5. Equal suffrage broadens women's minds, and leads them to take a more intelligent interest in public affairs. President Slocum, of Colorado College, Enos A. Mills, the forestry expert, Mrs. Decker, and many others, bear witness to this. The Hon. W. E. Mullen, Attorney-General of Wyoming, who went there opposed to woman suffrage and has been converted, writes: "It stimulates interest and study, on the part of women, in public affairs. Questions of public interest are discussed in the home. As the mother, sister, or teacher of young boys, the influence of woman is very great. The more she knows about the obligations of citizenship, the more she is able to teach the boys." A leading bookseller of Denver says he sold more books on political economy in the first eight months after women were given the ballot than he had sold in fifteen years before.

6. It makes elections and political meetings more orderly. The Hon. John W. Kingman, of the Wyoming Supreme Court, says: "In caucus discussions the presence of a few ladies is worth a whole squad of police."

7. It makes it easier to secure liberal appropriations for educational and humanitarian purposes. In Colorado the schools are not scrimped for money, as they are in the older and richer States. So say Mrs. Grenfell, General Irving Hale, and others.

8. It opens to women important positions now closed to them because they are not electors. Throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, and a considerable part of Europe, a host of women are rendering admirable service to the community in offices from which women in America are still debarred.

9. It increases the number of women chosen to such offices as are already open to them. Thus, in Colorado women were eligible as county superintendents of schools before their enfranchisement; but when they obtained the ballot the number of women elected to those positions showed an immediate and large increase.

10. It raises the average of political honesty among the voters. Judge Lindsey says: "Ninety-nine per cent. of our election frauds are committed by men."

11. It tends to modify a too exclusively commercial view of public affairs. G. W. Russell, Chairman of the Board of Governors of Canterbury College, New Zealand, writes: "Prior to women's franchise the distinctive feature of our politics was finance. Legislative proposals were regarded almost entirely from the point of view of, (1) What would they cost? and (2) what would be their effect from a commercial standpoint? The woman's view is not pounds nor pence, but her home, her family. In order to win her vote, the politicians had to look at public matters from her point of view. Her ideal was not merely money, but happy homes and a fair chance in life for her husband, her intended husband, and her present or prospective family."

12. Last, but not least, it binds the family more closely together. I say this with emphasis, though it is in direct opposition to an argument much brought forward by the opponents of woman suffrage. Let us give ear to words that are written, like the last, from a region where equal suffrage has been tried and proved.

The Hon. Hugh Lusk, ex-member of the New Zealand Parliament, says: "We find that equal suffrage is the greatest family bond and tie, the greatest strengthener of family life. It seemed odd at first to find half the benches at a political meeting occupied by ladies; but when men have got accustomed to it they do not like the other thing. When they found that they could take their wives and daughters to these meetings, and afterwards go home with them and talk it over, it was often the beginning of a new life for the family—a life of ideas and interests in common, and of a unison of thought."

It is related that the Japanese Government many years ago sent a commission to the United States to study the practical working of Christianity, with a view to introducing it into Japan as the State religion if the report of the commission proved favorable. The commission saw many evils rampant in America, and went home reporting that Christianity was a failure. The opponents of woman suffrage argue in the same way. They find evils in the enfranchised States, and straightway draw the conclusion that woman suffrage is a failure. But it may be said with truth of woman suffrage, as of Christianity, that these evils exist not because of it but in spite of it; and that it has effected a number of distinct improvements, and is on the way to effect yet more.

I have sat in the little chapel at Bethlehem in which tradition places the birth of the Saviour. It seemed fitting that it should be adorned with offerings of beautiful things. But while I mused there a voice seemed to say to me: "Look abroad! This divine child is a child no

more. He has grown to be a man and a deliverer. Go out into the world! Find his footsteps and follow them. Work, as he did, for the redemption of mankind. Suffer as he did, if need be, derision and obloquy. Make your protest against tyranny, meanness, and injustice!"

The weapon of Christian warfare is the ballot, which represents the peaceable assertion of conviction and will. Society everywhere is becoming converted to its use. Adopt it, O you women, with clean hands and a pure heart! Verify the best word written by the apostle—"In Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but a new creature," the harbinger of a new creation!

THE ASSAULT ON WOMANHOOD *

By LYMAN ABBOTT

IF I believed that the suffrage was the right of women, or would protect their rights, or would promote their interests, I should ardently favor it. For I seek to represent, and I believe that I do represent, a great silent constituency—the wives, the mothers, the daughters, who neither strive nor cry, and whose voice is not heard in the streets. If I fail in my undertaking, I ask their indulgence to one who, as son, husband, and father, has a triple reason to give them honor.

I am an advocate of woman's rights: her right to an open door to every vocation, her right to a fair opportunity for the highest and broadest education, her right to do whatever she can do and be whatever she can become; her right to determine her own appropriate sphere, not to have it determined for her by a lord and master; her right to be left free to follow the bent of her own divinely endowed nature, unchecked by vexatious restrictions, uncoerced by the presence of needless economic necessity, undiverted by the ill-judged appeals or the unfeminine sneers of her mistakenly ambitious sisters.

The book of Genesis gives two accounts of the creation of man, one in the first, the other in the second chapter. One represents man first made and woman added to be his helper and his subject. The other represents man and woman made in one act of creation, equally in the image of God, equally his children. What is popularly known as the Woman's Movement is a movement from one of these conceptions to the other—from the conception that woman was made as an afterthought

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